

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

今日北京

## BEIJING TODAY

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## Police Detain Recruitment Scammers at Glorious Oriental

BY YANG XIN

**G**lorious Oriental Plaza, with its stunning name and advantageous location, has become a favorite haunt of Beijing's swindlers and fraudsters.

Once a half-backed building opposite Beijing West Station – Asia's largest train station – today the Plaza is a gate through which all new arrivals must pass. Many are job-seeking migrants – ideal prey for local scam artists.

News that Beijing gangs were posing as employment agencies and cheating migrants out of their savings first appeared on message boards earlier this summer.

Local police raided one company

located on the plaza's fifth floor and arrested 12 people on July 14. The company, a recruitment agency, allegedly fabricated job postings and exaggerated salaries to attract job-hunters.

"At first they told clients that their placement service was free. But when you came to their office, they would demand 200 yuan to issue you an employee card. After that came more charges for supposedly required materials. Those who refused to pay were beaten," said a spokesperson for the Beijing police.

During the hour-long police raid, 33 new applicants showed up to enroll with

the agency.

The July 14 raid was not the first time police turned their attention to Glorious Oriental Plaza. Police said they have received two or more complaints about similar scams every day since January 2013.

Police said they are currently holding 56 people from seven companies suspected of engaging in similar scams.

Originally the most expensive half-wasted building in Beijing, Glorious Oriental Plaza was acquired by the Glorious Oriental Group in 2009 at a price of 2 billion yuan. ■

## CHINESE STOCK INDEXES

## SSE (Shanghai)

Close	Change	YTD
3,954.56	▲ 68.24 (1.76%)	+24%

## SZSE (Shenzhen)

Close	Change	YTD
2,298.79	▲ 49.61 (2.21%)	+63.2%

## HSI (Hong Kong)

Close	Change	YTD
24,018.80	▲ 102.78 (0.43%)	+4.22%

Accurate to market close on August 13, 2015







# Farmers' Markets Gone with Reluctant Farmers and Consumers

BY YANG XIN

**F**armers' markets may have started out as a foodie fad, but in the last decade they have become the bedrock of Beijing's upscale communities.

And now they are being demolished.

Located within an earshot of most major ring roads, farmers' markets united local shoppers with farmers promising some of the city's only reliably organic vegetables and craft cheeses, as well as local favorites like vats of aromatic soy milk.

But China's booming e-commerce industry has chipped away at the popularity of the local Dongdan, Xidan, Chongwenmen and Chaonei markets.

Wang Jianshe, a resident of the Lingjing Hutong in Xicheng district, said the farmers' market below his home was an important stop in his morning routine before it a real estate developer demolished it.

"Nowadays, the nearest market takes me 30 minutes to reach," Wang said in an interview with *People's Daily*.

"Consumer demands are increasingly diversified. Some prefer shopping at the farmers' market while others shop online. But it seems like there were more people in the former group," said Ma Zengjun, president of China Agriculture Wholesale Market Association.

For vendors caught in the transition, the shift has been hard to navigate.

The Guang'an Tiantao farmers' market, once a bustling market in Xicheng, closed in early 2014. By late 2014, many had returned to sell their goods in street-side stalls.

"Some went to the new market across the street, others work flexibly around the old market like me," a fruit vendor surnamed Hu told the *Beijing Evening News*.

North of the south Guang'an Hutong are more than 20 vendors who used to maintain stalls in the old market. Most complain that the booth fees in the new market are too expensive – up to 30 percent higher than the old market. In order to break even, they choose to sell out of unlicensed roadside stalls that pit them against the city's notorious chengguan.

For those who have settled in the new market, the future remains uncertain.

"The 30 percent hike forced many of my counterparts out of the business. I might give up and return to my hometown at the end of the year if I can't break even," said a vendor surnamed Zhang. ■

## Can the Saddest Essay Save the Poorest Village?

BY YANG XIN



**M**ukuyiwumu's heartbreaking story of the tragic loss of both her parents went viral early this month. Published under the pseudonym Liu Yi, the fourth-grade student's tale recounted her father's tragic death in 2010 and her mother's death due to a heart attack in 2014.

Today she lives with her paternal grandmother in Yuexi County, an undeveloped rural area in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan province.

The touching story catapulted Mukuyiwumu and her village into the spotlight. Media, charity organizations and jittery government officials followed close behind.

Sina.com reported that local charity organizations received about 920,000 yuan in donations within the first several days after the story went viral.

But Huan Hongbin, head of a local charity foundation, said Mukuyiwumu has been receiving a 600 yuan monthly allowance in addition to the 3,390 yuan in subsidies offered to the family each month.

In rural Sichuan, that money goes a long way, he said.

Liangshan is a nationally recognized poverty zone and the target of continuous aid programs. The government has been struggling to reign in the region's rampant drug use and HIV spread in recent years.

"The Liangshan prefecture government was issued 27.7 billion yuan to improve the local people's livelihood from 2007 to 2012. That in addition to a nearly constant flow of charitable donations over the years," said Qiu Li, a reporter at Guancha.cn.

"But that social aid does no good for the residents. Many have come to rely upon social assistance and are unwilling to work or strive. That laziness has bred a society of drug addicts who profit on child trafficking," he said.

The mountainous prefecture recorded 35,329 cases of HIV from 1995 to 2014. It currently has 21,631 people living with the virus, CRI reported.

Local officials disputed accusations of laziness. "Among the 1,991 villagers in Baoshi, 300 are working outside as migrant laborers. That means almost every family has at least one member who has gone out to earn money if you account for local family sizes. You can't just say people here are lazy," said Pan Xiaowu, party secretary of Baoshi Village in Yuexi County.

While it remains debatable whether local residents should be blamed for their inertia, stories like Mukuyiwumu's have proven very effective at rallying public attention.

In addition to donations, this district may need assistance in psychological support and education. ■

## Xicheng Dama the Top Police Spy Force

BY DIAO DIAO

**T**he Xicheng Qunzhong, a west-side answer to the east side's shadowy Chaoyang Qunzhong, is making older women the top source of police's neighborhood intelligence.

Wang Jing, director of Xicheng Comprehensive Management Office, said the Xicheng Qunzhong include more than 70,000 volunteers, 50,000 of whom are registered as security volunteers.

"Most are between the ages of 58 and 65, and more than 70 percent are retired females," Wang said.

Like the famously noisy park dancers, female volunteers with the Xicheng Qunzhong are known as the "Xicheng Dama."

Most can be easily identified by their red armbands, red waistcoats and red hats. The volunteers are assigned to dif-

ferent areas with different duties according to their age, gender and other personal status. The volunteers watch for suspicious vehicles or unusual people.

Each volunteer is given an info book containing guidance and information such as what kind of clues should be reported to police and the contact information of the 28 police stations in Xicheng district. The group meets for regular training before holidays and big events.

According to statistics from Xicheng police, Xicheng volunteers contributed information to 11,937 criminal cases during the last six months, and 72 offered clues related to violence and terrorists.

Police paid more than 560,000 yuan in rewards to the informants during the first half of 2015. ■





# Guns, BB Guns Illegal But Available Online

BY DIAO DIAO

In the first half of this year, the number of guns confiscated by Beijing police has increased some 30 percent. Seizures included some 420 guns, 310 BB guns, more than 32,000 bullets and 200 bombs and artillery shells.

Most were procured online.

Chinese search engines censor most search results for the word "gun." Arms dealers typically work in code.

Beijing Youth Daily reporters recently investigated a BBS for arms enthusiasts where they found that the words "dogs" and "dog food" were being used in place of BB guns and ammunition. The reporters posed as a buyer and contacted one of the dealers over QQ to confirm that guns were for sale.

Air guns made in China, imported air guns, ball guns and other types of guns were all listed as available. The cheapest air gun was 1,200 yuan, and the most expensive cost up to 10,000 yuan.

The seller told reporters that gun transactions could only be completed in person, and that they would not mail guns by express courier. Purchases records would be purged after the transaction.

Police recently arrested one arms dealer in his early 30s who was selling M4A1 assault rifles, Desert Eagle pistols, G18 pistols, M1911, KG46, PPK pistols and an M14. A raid on his home also revealed clips, BB bullets, slingshots, scopes and other gun accessories.

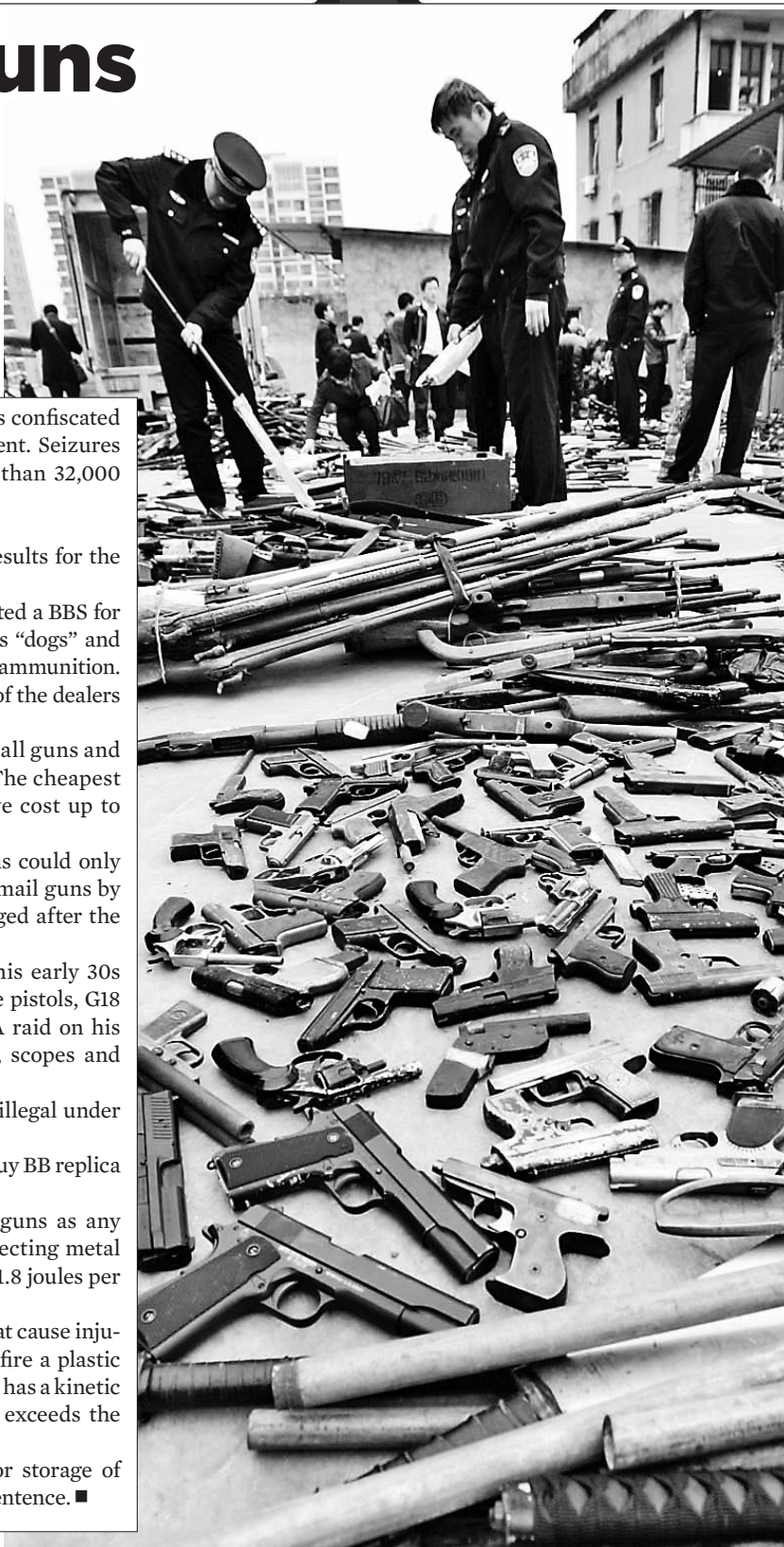
Although all the guns were replicas, they are illegal under Chinese law as they are still able to cause injury.

Gun sellers say that most buyers are fans that buy BB replica guns for collecting or hunting.

The Ministry of Public Security defines BB guns as any gun-shaped object with a muzzle capable of projecting metal or other materials with a kinetic energy of 0.16 to 1.8 joules per square centimeter.

The Law on Control of Guns treats BB guns that cause injuries as firearms. For example, a BB gun that can fire a plastic bullet through an aluminum can at a short distance has a kinetic energy of 2 joules per square centimeter, which exceeds the strict definition of a BB gun.

The illegal production, sale, transportation or storage of guns in China carries a three- to ten-year prison sentence. ■



## Doctors Remove 25cm Flashlight from Man's Anus

Doctors in Guangzhou conducted a two-hour surgery earlier this week to remove a hard flashlight from a man's anus. Doctors at the hospital said the he was admitted at night without any obvious injuries, though he appeared to be in pain and pointed repeatedly at his butt.

Doctors planned to use to keyhole surgery to remove the object before they realized it was 25 centimeters long and stuck deeply inside the man's body. Removal of the flashlight required abdominal surgery.

Sun Feng, the lead surgeon, said he did not know how the object ended up inside the man's body. Local media said it somehow occurred when the man was singing with his colleagues at a local karaoke bar.

(Tencent)

## Residents Enjoy Watermelons at Crash Site

A van carrying watermelons struck a private car earlier this week in Hefei, Anhui province. The incident did not cause any injuries, but the van spilled its load of watermelons all over the street.

Many people rushed to snatch up the watermelons. A passing driver stopped his car and began collecting the watermelons, saying, "The crash is not my business. I'm just here to eat watermelons."

Local media reported that all the watermelons finished within a few minutes. Local traffic police arrived after all the watermelons were eaten.

(Tencent)

## Drunk Man Smashes 16 Cars After Scolding

Police in Zhashui County, Shaanxi province were notified of 16 cars being maliciously smashed on Hexi Road in late July.

Surveillance footage showed an apparently inebriated man wandering by at 11 p.m. that night. About three hours later, the man returned and began to smash the nearby cars. He punched the cars at first, but soon switched to using bricks to smash out the windows.

Local police confirmed the man was an 18-year-old restaurant worker surnamed Du. After his arrest, he told police that he went out drinking with his friends and came home late to an angry girlfriend. Du took out his frustration on the 16 cars and pushed over another five scooters.

Du is currently being held under criminal detention while the investigation continues.

(Tencent)

## Chongqing Toddler Slams Beer Like a Boss

The 19-month-old Tangtang (pseudonym) is unlike most of his peers in Chongqing. While other children are still nursing or being fed baby formula, Tangtang has graduated to beer.

In order to raise a more "manly" son, the boy's 31-year-old father decided to start the boy on beer as soon as possible. He gave Tangtang his first beer in July 2014 and the infant was drunk almost immediately.

During the last year, he has worked to introduce the boy to beer, wine, cheese and potent baijiu. The toddler is reportedly able to finish a half bottle of beer on his own.

(Tencent)

# Car Washers the Latest Biz in O2O Scramble

BY DIAO DIAO

Download an app. Tap. Log in. Fill in your vehicle info and pick a time. In five minutes, you can make an appointment for on-site car washing services.

The cost is absurdly low: 1 yuan.

In their race to corner the market in car-related service apps, a new line of car washing services are copying the Didi Dache strategy of impossibly subsidized services.

The Research Report on Aftermarket Chain Management of China's Autos in 2014 by China Chain Store & Franchise Association found that China's aftermarket auto service industry was worth 600 billion yuan. That number could reach 1 trillion yuan by 2018.

That growth represents a key battleground for upcoming online-to-offline (O2O) apps.

More than 50 apps offer on-site car washing services. On WeChat, numerous public accounts also offer car-washing appointments using the users' GPS loca-



CFP Photos

tion. Most encourage users to buy a one-year membership card.

A woman surnamed Xu who bought a one-year membership card for 188 yuan said she was confused about how the company plans to make money.

"I wasn't planning to buy a membership card, but it was just too cheap. When I talked with the worker, he told me he was paid 25 yuan for each car he washed," Xu said.

With each wash coming at a 24-yuan loss, the company is clearly burning money.

On July 16, the first car washing service company announced it was closing its on-site service. Another company in Xiamen, Fujian province with 100,000 users followed shortly after.

Li Chuanxing, a spokesman for the company, said they had already burned through 160 million yuan in addition to the company's 10 million yuan of registered capital.

In addition to the business aspect, the government has expressed concerns about water waste.

Reporters at the Beijing Youth Daily found that on-site car washing services take advantage of the lower price for residential water. Actual car wash businesses spend 160 yuan per ton of water while residents spend only 4 yuan.

The Beijing Water Authority noted that such on-site services also lack the technology to reuse water, exacerbating waste. Runoff water also contains chemical detergents that enter the drainage system and contribute to the city's soil pollution. ■





# Sustainable Business Finds Fertile Ground in Great Wall Villages

BY SIMINA MISTREANU



Photos by Simina Mistreanu

**A**t the foothills of the Great Wall at Mutianyu, two mixed Chinese and American couples have built their version of an ideal business.

They turned an abandoned schoolhouse into a restaurant and art gallery. They opened a hotel in an abandoned tile factory and a noodle shop in an old stone farmhouse. They're leasing several villagers' homes and renting them to tourists. The food served at all of these places is organic-grown and comes from the couples' or the villagers' gardens.

It's a business model built around supporting villagers by paying them fair wages, rent and service fees, and by helping them set up businesses – but also around making a profit.

"If you can't meet your payroll, you don't get to keep playing," said Jim Spear, one of the founders and an architect. "You're not helping anyone. So one of our important claims has been that we need to make sense as a for-profit business."

In the 10 years since the partners launched The Schoolhouse, they've attracted as much as 100 million yuan (\$15 million) in investment, they say. But the challenge is to preserve the sustainable principles by which they do business.

Although far less common than in Europe and the US, sustainable businesses are burgeoning across China. Community-supported agriculture is becoming popular, with city dwellers buying weekly baskets of chemical-free vegetables from suburban farmers such as Shared Harvest and Little Donkey Farm. Sustainable tourism and manufacturing businesses are also becoming more common.

At a larger level, more Chinese companies comply with international corporate social responsibility standards than ever before, though there's still a long way to go, according to a report published by the US Chamber of Commerce-Asia in 2012.

And laws are starting to press for change across other industries.

The Schoolhouse's success is being taught this fall as a case study in marketing and social responsibility at China Europe International Business School, one of Shanghai's top business schools.

That may be a sign of interest in the field and of its potential for growth.

## Challenges and Rewards

But for people who want to start a sustainable tourism or agriculture business, land itself could be the first deterrent.

China's land-use law doesn't give people the right to own land. They can lease it for up to several decades and own any structures built on the land, but they can't take away the improvements at the end of the lease period.

The Schoolhouse's properties are all leased from individual farmers or village councils.

"You get no title. You get no deed. It really is the villagers' home," said Julie Upton-Wang, one of the partners.

People are often concerned about their land being taken away or about the length of time they can use it, Spear said. His suggestion to business people is to regard the investment in the land as an expense to be amortized across the lease period and judge if it's worthwhile.

Their venture started about 10 years ago. Spear and his wife, Liang Tang, bought a house in Mutianyu. One day, the mayor asked them to think about making a contribution to the community. The couple reached out to their longtime friends, Peiming Wang and Julie Upton-Wang, and started talking about opening a business.

Mutianyu was a tourism site, so they wondered what impact tourism had on the rural community.

"And it turns out that with big-scale projects almost all of the benefits go to outsiders," Spear said. "Local people still get left behind. They might get some scut jobs, but they don't get help starting businesses, they don't get promotions, they don't get training. So we wanted to have small-scale businesses because that way we could fit in with the local community rather than take it over."

The problem with small businesses, Spear said, is that often founders work hard but still lose money. So their solution was to open several small operations – lodging, agricultural, restaurants – but under a single corporate umbrella, which could provide services such as HR, sales, purchasing, finance and marketing.

In the fall of 2006, they opened a restaurant and art gallery in the abandoned schoolhouse, and a lodging and a noodle shop in restored farmhouses. Preserving the original buildings and materials was part of the plan.

"The business advantage of keeping what's already there is then you get a story," Spear said.

During the 2008 Summer Olympics, The Schoolhouse hosted corporate events for high-profile clients such as NBC, Universal, General Electric, Coca-Cola, Visa and Hilton. With the income from that year, they recouped their investment and broke ground on a new project, the Brickyard hotel, on the site of an abandoned tile factory.

The businesses employ about 50 people full-time, 50 part-timers, plus service providers and construction workers when needed. About 80 percent of the employees are villagers.

Locals also provide vegetables and hand-made goods such as uniforms and spa pajamas. Spear hires locals to work in construction projects for other clients, and he has helped one villager to found his own landscaping business.

"We're still in business after 10 years, we're not bankrupt, we certainly haven't made enough to go off and be able to retire," Spear said about The Schoolhouse's bottom line. "We work really hard. But that's OK."

The partners say they're proud to have made a contribution and leave something behind, but also because they've stuck to their ethical practices and haven't resorted to bribing or cheating.

"It's not sustainable to cheat," Spear said. "You may prosper for a little while, but in the longer run, you've built on a foundation of sand." ■





# Directors Dare to Dream About Chinese Sci-fi

BY SHU PENGQIAN

Photo by news.mydrivers.com

**D**irector Zhang Panpan announced the sci-fi film *The Three Body Problem* has completed filming and was entering post-production on Aug. 6. Its story of alien invasion during the Cultural Revolution is adapted from the work of science fiction writer Liu Cixin's eponymous series.

*The Three Body Problem* was praised as a milestone in Chinese sci-fi literature. The first part was published in the US in 2014 and was nominated for the Nebula Award by Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America this year.

Pointing to the novel's popularity, producer Kong Ergou is predicting a box office take of more than 50 million yuan for next July.

Other Chinese directors and companies have announced their own plans for other sci-fi films.

China Film Group Corporation said in November 2014 that it had purchased the film for Liu's other sci-fi novels, including *Time After Nova*, *The Wandering Earth* and *Micro Era*. Director Zhang Yimou is preparing for his first sci-fi film, *The Great Wall*, and Hong Kong director Zhou Xingchi is planning a sci-fi film titled *The Mermaid*.

For most Chinese film fans, "sci-fi film" is the sole domain of Hollywood.

*Jurassic World*, *Avatar*, *Pacific Rim* and *Avengers* have defined the Chinese view of what a real sci-fi film should look like. It's hard to imagine any product carrying the Made in China label without resembling the laughable *Electric Boy*, *Crazy Rabbit* or *Chang Jiang No.7* "sci-fi" efforts.

Frequent messages about popular directors taking on the sci-fi genre have

given Chinese film fans new hope.

For Chinese filmmakers, sci-fi is unfamiliar territory. Technological shortcomings and limited screenwriting experience in the genre make directors fearful of attempting the grand scenes described by writers. Wuxia films are substantially more familiar territory with an established road to international attention that includes *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* and *Hero*.

After years of silence, Chinese directors may finally have the courage and money to attempt a real sci-fi film.

"Many film-making companies are already prepared for sci-fi films. More than one film has been given an initial 10 million yuan investment, which is more than we expected," said Yan Peng, planning director of Beijing Galloping Horse Media.

But big numbers can't hide the trouble in store for the fledgling Chinese sci-fi film industry.

"It's very difficult to shoot a sci-fi film, and now is not the time for Chinese directors to attempt it," director Ning Hao said in an interview with *21 Century Business Review*. Ning purchased the rights to *The Country Teacher*, another of Liu's sci-fi novels, in 2011. The film has been stuck in pre-production ever since.

Computer graphics technology is a common sticking point, with China lagging behind most of the West and several Asian countries.

The Chinese film industry lacks the professionals dedicated to cutting-edge effects needed to drive sci-fi forward. The few semi-qualified professionals it has are scattered across a handful of different companies.



Photo by mt.sohu.com

"Some Chinese talents who have mastered the technology are stuck in small companies without teams. These small companies can't receive enough orders to prop up their survival in the market, meaning these people's skills are going to waste," Jin Guoping, president of Shenzhen Global Digital Creations Holdings, told *21 Century Business Review*.

Without domestic professionals who can handle the post-production requirements of a sci-fi film, Chinese filmmakers have no choice other than to head abroad.

The producer of *The Three Body Problem* recently announced the film had received a gross investment of 20 million yuan and that it was hiring VHQ, the effects team behind *Avatar* and *Harry Potter*, to work on the film.

Nevertheless, it's hard to overcome the impression left by its poor 2014 trailer.

Another problem is that few Chinese sci-fi writers have any experience adapting their works to the screen or cooper-

ating with an experienced screenwriter. Chinese screenwriters are similarly clueless about the limits of computer graphics technology. This makes it especially difficult to adapt popular novels to meet the director's demands.

For now, Chinese filmmakers are taking a risk.

"Once the audience cannot tolerate sci-fi failures any longer, they will stop paying to see our movies. If filmmakers can't earn a profit on sci-fi films, they will not invest in them and the sci-fi film will collapse again," director Shen Yue told the *People's Daily Online*.

But in the short term, Chinese sci-fi films are certain to achieve high box office sales. After all, people are curious what a domestic sci-fi film will look like. And fans will come just to see their favorite stars.

"No matter whether *The Three Body Problem* is good or bad, I will probably go and see it in the theater," wrote a Weibo user named Xiao Chouyu said. "My idol Feng Shaofeng is playing the lead role." ■





Photo by BBC

# UK Still Keen on Learning From Chinese Education

BY YANG XIN

**W**hat would happen if a British classroom were taken over by Chinese teachers? That was the zany premise of *Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese Schools*, a three-part documentary by the BBC.

The show flew in five teachers from China to put British middle school students through China's famously rigorous education system.

In the first segment, which aired Aug. 4, the BBC invited five top Chinese teachers to lead a class of 50 young students at a state-funded school in southern England. Unsurprisingly, the Chinese teachers were appalled by the disruptive, challenging and lazy youths.

But things are rarely so simple in the world of edited video.

The British public's shock and disappointment triggered a series of investigations that revealed how the BBC's editors dramatically exaggerated the conflict between British children and their Chinese teachers.

## Sino-British Plan

The British government is struggling to salvage the country's public education system.

In UNESCO's 2014 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), China was ranked as the top-performing nation in math, reading and science. The UK ranked only 26, which suggests that by the age of 15, children in China were three years ahead of their English peers in math.

In January 2014, the British government sent 50 leading teachers and former UK Education Minister Liz Truss to Shanghai to learn how UK schools could improve their math and science teaching.



Photo by thevideo.me

Early this year, 30 Shanghai teachers were invited by the British Department of Education to British primary schools in the hope that they could work their mathematical magic on a generation of children and raise flagging standards.

"There's a lot of chanting and recitation which to our English ears seems a bit formulaic," said Ben McMullen, deputy head of Fox Primary School in Kensington, London after watching Lilian Jie Lu teaching fraction math. "But it's a way of embedding that understanding."

Zhan Wansheng, director of the China National Institute for Educational Research (CNIER), once stated that European nations' support for Chinese educa-

tional methods reflected uncertainty in the West.

"[Western] educational systems are overly focused on the child and ignore grades. To some extent, educators have a feeling that the child-centered approach does not do enough to teach the basics," Zhan said.

## Discouraged Parents

While welcomed by overseas educational officials and teachers, it might be surprising that the Chinese are traveling in the opposite direction in search of good education.

Many Chinese netizens chimed in about the BBC's education program on

Sina Weibo, fascinated to learn how the British system worked and using it to criticize domestic education.

"Western education teaches children to live happily and think independently. It fosters creativity," read one comment. That focus on creativity appeared again and again in the online discussion. "China's education is just cramming. It is solely performance-based," commentators continued.

That may be why so many mainland parents are determined to send their children abroad.

"Pupils from Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland now account for nearly a third of all overseas children at British boarding schools, and the numbers are growing steadily," wrote Helen Warrell of the *Financial Times*.

Warrell told of one Chinese mother Wendy Le who sent her 14-year-old son at Whitgift School in Croydon and was now seeking a boarding school for her three-year-old daughter.

"Chinese schools just want academic results – especially in the sciences – so pupils cannot learn about art and music," she says. "Also, we don't have lab equipment in Chinese schools, so children never get the chance to practice what they learn."

## Two-way Education Trade

The importing of Chinese-style education has been met with skepticism within the country.

Ruth Merttens, a professor of primary education at the University of St. Mark and St. John, is one of the most vocal skeptics.

"I'm sure we can learn from the Shanghai teachers. Some things will be appropriate, others will not. In England, we have a very diverse set of communities. We expect children to enjoy primary education, to feel they are in the driving seat for their own learning, or at least that they have a hand on the steering wheel," she said.

"In Shanghai it's about delivery – it's a different model. Culturally we are millions of miles apart. We're not better, we're different," Merttens said.

Cultural differences between the UK and China are not to be ignored.

Having been visiting schools in China and Asia for the past 20 years, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof spoke highly of the Chinese social moral.

"The Chinese system of education with its 'Confucian reverence' is indeed steeped in the culture: in Chinese schools, teachers are much respected, and the most admired kid is often the brain rather than the jock or class clown," he said.

That cultural difference makes it difficult to adopt or mix educational systems. But that hasn't stopped people from trying.

In a related story from the *Financial Times* last March, William Vanbergen, an old Etonian, is expanding his education consultancy. While the business was previously aimed at bringing Chinese students to the UK's top schools, it is now also aiding hard-up UK residents to send their children to China.

"As well as having good academic results, the pupils will speak fluent Mandarin and have a real understanding of China. If they put that on their application form to Goldman Sachs, it will definitely mark them out," Vanbergen said. ■





# ‘Oriental Spirit’ Exhibition Lands in Beijing

Photos by Korean Culture Center

BY WANG YAN

A joint exhibition of Chinese and Korean artists opened this week as part of the visual section of the 8th China International Youth Arts Festival, a 12-day event.

The collection features 46 pieces, including the sculptures and paintings of 11 artists from South Korea and 11 from China.

Themed as “Oriental Spirit,” the collected works explore how contemporary artists can create modern works while looking back into their own cultural and historical identities.

The concept of contemporary art is going through drastic changes as it takes on a more diverse and personal form. The exhibition, said the organizer, serves as a platform for exchange and showcases the countries artists’ pursuit of freedom and personalized art forms.

Compared with works from the 1980 and 1990s, this exhibition’s pieces display an increasing influence from East Asian tradition.

Gentleness, charm and poetry blend in the young artists’ work to begin a new round of spiritual exploration that reckons traditional value with modern society.

Organized by China International Culture Association and Korean Embassy, the exhibition is hosted by the Korean Culture Center.

The exhibition will continue on to Chengdu and

Xiamen after its Beijing leg concludes.

The 8th China International Youth Arts Festival runs through Aug. 28. Festival events will be held in nine Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Jinan.

Other festival events include stage performances, exhibitions and academic forums. Artists from 28 countries and regions will participate in this year’s festival, and a total of 550 activities are scheduled.

Festival organizers said this year’s programs would introduce support for youth artists who have shown talents and creativity in the Chinese arts. Those selected will be offered new opportunities for career development.

Russia is sending several of its famous art troupes and artists to the festival. These artists will stage 10 performances, including the opening and closing ceremony.

The annual festival, created in 2008, is a special platform where young artists can demonstrate their artistic crafts and a way to enhance cultural exchange between China and the world abroad. ■

## Korean Culture Center

⌚ 10 am-5 pm, through August 19

📍 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang

💎 Free



# Sweden Brings ‘Cosmic Pop’ Artist to Beijing

BY WANG YAN

Swedish cosmic pop artist Zhala Rifatis performing at The Bar at Migas this Saturday.

Rifat was born and raised in Stockholm, Sweden, where an interest in the local club scene moved her to develop her talents as a dancer and singer. Swedish recording artist Robin Miriam Carlsson discovered Rifat in 2012, and she was soon signed by Konichiwa Records.

Born to a Kurdish family in Sweden, Rifat often performs live in front of Kurdish and Swedish flags. The music website Pitchfork called the move a purposeful attempt to blur her identity, as “she was perpetually forced to negotiate as a neither blonde-haired nor blue-eyed child in mid-’90s Sweden.”

Rifat’s heritage shines through on songs

like “Prophet” and “I’m in Love.”

Her haunting and evocative melodies are often packed with thought-provoking lyrics and undeniable hooks. Using Stockholm as her base, Rifat also incorporates modern-day-mindset translation into her music, making it futuristic. It’s a style she calls “cosmic pop.”

Rifat’s unconventional fashion taste and stage presence surprised many at the Jean Paul Gaultier exhibit at Stockholm’s Moderna Museet. She was also the opening act for Robyn’s tour in London, Berlin and Stockholm.

Her darkly epic track “Slippin Around” emerged online at the start of 2012, where it was accompanied by a creepy and striking video.

That caught the attention of My Old Kentucky Blog, Discobelle and The Line of

Best Fit, which noted that Rifat might be a new and unusual popstar.

Her chaotic, grunge-inspired music taste and dancing style make her one of Sweden’s most unusual pop exports.

Dan Nguyen, also known as Demon-slayer, will also performing at The Bar at Migas this Saturday. Born in Los Angeles, Nguyen has been experimenting with music since 1988. He now spends most of his time in Saigon, but he has also been participating in music festivals across the world. ■

## The Bar at Migas

⌚ 10-11:30 pm, August 8; midnight-5 am, August 9

📍 6th Floor, Nali Patio, Sanlitun, Chaoyang

💎 60 yuan



Photos by Xiami.com





# Cozy Getaway in Sunshine Garden



Families seeking a relaxing holiday or party venue outside the bustling downtown can visit Sunshine Garden. The park has a beautiful flower garden and modern amusement facilities and is easily accessed from Beijing's city center.

Built in 2013, the 180-acre garden offers five luxury suites, double rooms, a kitchen, a swimming pool, a racecourse and recreational facilities including two automatic mah-jong tables, foosball, karaoke, slides and seesaws.

Sunshine Garden can be booked by groups of up to 20 people. It entertains only one batch of guests at a time to keep unfamiliar patrons out.

While busywork normally grabs away people's time for cooking and family, a weekend in Sunshine Garden offers guests the chance to prepare their own delicious meals and brush up on any rusty culinary skills.

Guests can find virtually every cooking appliance in the clean and roomy kitchen. Organic vegetables and fruit, planted by the owners of Sunshine Garden in a nearby farm, are available for those who want the experience of harvesting their own produce.

The venue also provides barbecue facilities in its spacious yard.

Make your reservations early to ensure that Sunshine Garden is available on your next family or company outing. ■

(By Shu Pengqian)

➤ Adjacent to the Olympic Rowing-Canoeing Park, Shunyi

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## BEIJING TODAY

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